

ADVENT 2021

# EMBRACE YOUR OWN PACE



BY KATE TALIAFERRO

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Advent is a journey, it is not a race. We cannot be left behind,  
we cannot lose when we already know the ending. Therefore,  
each journey must in itself hold some value for the one  
walking it.

# INTRODUCTION

The journey of Advent is a mere four weeks long. While society continues to inch the celebrations of all the holidays earlier and earlier, the Church's liturgical calendar has remained the same for hundreds of years. There is a certain beauty to the structure and order of the rhythms of the liturgical calendar. The four weeks of Advent provide us an opportunity to set aside time to prepare our hearts, minds and homes for the coming of the Christ child.

What follows is a unique Advent journey. More properly, I ought to say journeys. In the classic style of "Choose Your Own Adventure" books, there are multiple ways or paths for you to take on your Advent journey. These paths will sometimes converge, giving you the opportunity to "jump" from one path to another. However, as this is your own journey, ultimately it is up to you if you choose to change paths on any day you choose, or if you choose to follow multiple paths. As the title says, embrace your own pace.

There are four paths, each with their own guide.

The Joseph path is one of concrete actions and specific reflections. At the start of each week, you will be encouraged to find a specific time to spend in Adoration or attend daily Mass. Joseph, as I envision him, was a very focused and task oriented person. As a carpenter, there must have been a specific order of doing things, a certain way each piece of material or tool was used. He was decisive, able to decide how to handle Mary's situation before receiving his vision, and then being able to pivot the 180° and begin to make plans for their marriage. When, again, he received the vision which told him to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt, it did not take two days to pack and plan. They were up and moving at daylight.

The Joseph path is for you if you are interested in an active approach to Advent. Joseph's path also encourages you to space out your home decorating plans. Consider looking ahead to see how these things are spaced out. If it does not follow your family's traditions, pray about spacing things out to savor the season and adjust the path as necessary.

The Magi's path take a more intellectual and reflective approach to Advent. The general path for the Magi involves a day of reading and reflection, then a day of journaling on what you prayed about the previous day. There are readings from Scripture, Church Fathers, Catholic thinkers and popes. If you are looking to stretch your knowledge and understanding of God, the Incarnation and Christmas in general, then this path is for you.

Mary's path is one of prayerful reflection with a few days of activity sprinkled in. Scripture tells us Mary pondered all the things that happened to her in her heart. But this doesn't mean she sat in her home the rest of her life contemplating the mysteries within it. On Mary's path you will encounter

some intellectual readings, some journaling and some ideas for spiritual activities during the season.

Not all of us will have the time already set aside for Joseph's path, nor the desire the intellectual challenge of the Magi's path. While Mary's path is a gentle mix of the two, even this may feel like too much. We have all been through a lot these past two years. Perhaps you are tired, weary, and simply need an Advent that will bring you peace and stillness, not more activity or a longer to-do list. If this sounds like you, then the Shepherd's path may be just what you are looking for.

**The Shepherd's path** is a way of minimalism and simplicity. There is one thing to reflect upon or do for the entire week. That's it. It may be to start your day with the same prayer, or work on memorizing a small piece of Scripture. Shepherds in the Bible were not learned, nor were they respected. They were seen as simple folk with a simple task that most people didn't really want. But it was to these humble ones, these near outcasts, that the angels came to and announced Christ's birth. And it was they, who in wonder and awe, got up and went to Jesus. They did not have to go and put away their fancy clothes for the journey, or lock up their home or find someone to watch their business. They got up and went. The Shepherd's Path is our way of showing up for Jesus every day in little ways. These little ways hallow our day and help us keep our eyes fixed on Him.

## A Few Notes

Any Scripture verses found in this text are taken from the [usccb.org](http://usccb.org) website's NAB translation of the Bible. If you choose to look up the verses in your own Bible at home and have a different translation, you may encounter different phrasing. I see this only as a benefit because it will continue

to grow your understanding of the original text. I also personally find different translations interesting. If this is not something you have explored I encourage you to do so in these coming weeks.

As said previously, I encourage you to pick a path and stick with it. They all will mix and mingle at some point or another. However, again, this is your journey. If you choose to follow two paths, all four, jump to a different one because it's question or thought resonates with you on that day, it's completely OK. This is your Advent and your journey with God. This text is merely a guide to help you stay focused along the way.

There may be days, especially on the Mary Ponders path, where there is only a verse or statement given. The idea is for you to carry that with you as inspiration for your day. Perhaps that is where you start your prayer time. You could write it on a notecard and place it by your sink or on your dashboard. This could be the verse for your *Lectio Divina* or Ignatian imaginative prayer. However you choose to use these prayer prompts, they are yours for the day. Embrace the pace of your day as you find new ways to hallow it through these reflections.



## ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This is a completely free resources. As such, I would ask that you do not print 50 copies to pass out in the back of church the first Sunday of Advent (this would also violate the copyright rules the USCCB has on their online Bible). However, placing a link to the blog post which will contain the journal in your bulletin, on your personal Facebook page, etc. for others to follow and download themselves, that is perfectly fine and encouraged. Not everyone can afford, or remembers to buy on time, the many journals and reflections that are available.

I see this as my Advent gift to you and whomever you choose to share it with.



# *Behold*

the Virgin shall conceive and bear  
a son, and shall call him Emmanuel  
Isaiah 7:14

## Joseph's Daily Task

Pick a day and time to attend Adoration this week. Commit to at least one hour in the presence of the Lord.

## Magi's Meditation

*Behold, the Virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call him Emmanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)*

Read this passage over again. Spend today marveling at the simplicity and curiosity of God's plan for salvation.

## Mary Ponders

How does the mystery of the Incarnation, that Jesus, truly God becomes truly Man, affect or influence your life? How did Mary respond to this mystery?

## Shepherd's Simplicity

Begin and end each day with the following prayer for the Elevation of the Host at Mass:

*My Lord and My God!*

NOVEMBER 28, 2021 - THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

## Joseph's Daily Task

Go back and read the verse for this week from Isaiah. How do you think Joseph felt when Mary told him about the miracle of Jesus? When have you been presented with an opportunity to believe what you could not see? Feel free to use the journal space if desired.

## Magi's Meditation

Dear Jesus,

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## Mary Ponders

Continue pondering yesterday's questions Use the journaling space if desired, or unite your prayer with those of the Shepherds.

## Shepherd's Simplicity

Begin and end each day with the following prayer for the Elevation of the Host at Mass:

*My Lord and My God!*

## Joseph's Daily Task

Consider a struggle you are currently facing. Choose someone in your life to offer that pain, sorrow or difficulty up to God for today. Do your best to keep them present in your mind as you go about your day.

## Magi's Meditation

On this account I beg and entreat all of you to be present with much zeal and enthusiasm, each having vacated your own house, so that we may see our Master lying in the manger, dressed in swaddling-clothes - that awe-inspiring and miraculous sight. What kind of defense could we have, what kind of excuse, when he came down from heaven for our sake while we can't even leave the house to go to him? Or when the Magi, who were barbarians and foreigners, hurried from Persia to see him lying in the manger? But you, a Christian, can't be bothered to travel even a short distance in order to enjoy this blessed sight? For if we're present in faith we'll certainly see him lying in the manger this table fulfills the role of the manger.

*St. John Chrysostom. A Homily in Preparation for the Celebration of Christmas*

*Today, Mary's path joins that of the Shepherds. If you wish to change guides, today is a good day to do so.*

## Mary Ponders

## Shepherd's Simplicity

Begin and end each day with the following prayer for the Elevation of the Host at Mass:

*My Lord and My God!*

NOVEMBER 30 2021 - TUESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

## Joseph's Daily Task

Take 15 minutes (or more) to connect one-on-one with someone close to you. This could be a spouse, child, parent, neighbor, the person you offered your struggle for yesterday, etc. Ideally in person but if necessary via phone, video chat etc.

## Magi's Meditation

Dear Jesus,

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## Mary Ponders

Do you trust God with your future? Your present?  
Take this question to prayer. If you can, take it to daily Mass or Adoration. How is God calling you to surrender to His plan for your life today?

## Shepherd's Simplicity

Begin and end each day with the following prayer for the Elevation of the Host at Mass:

*My Lord and My God!*

## Joseph's Daily Task

Make plans to set up your Nativity scene, Advent Wreath, or other Advent decorations if you have not already. Protect this time by scheduling it, preparing a special treat, etc. We can prepare our homes slowly for Christmas, savoring the Advent season.

## Magi's Meditation

Re-read the text from St. John Chrysostom. What struck you? How can you take this exhortation to heart? Today, make one meaningful, if necessary, scheduled, move in the direction the Holy Spirit is leading you through this reading.

## Mary Ponders

Continue pondering yesterday's question. If you were unable to make it to Mass or Adoration, perhaps today is the day that will work.

## Shepherd's Simplicity

Begin and end each day with the following prayer for the Elevation of the Host at Mass:

*My Lord and My God!*

DECEMBER 2, 2021 - THURSDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

## Joseph's Daily Task

Review your week. Were you able to complete all of your Joseph tasks? Use today to repeat a favorite, complete something left undone, or revisit one that you found especially meaningful.

## Magi's Meditation

### Mary Ponders

*Behold, the Virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call him Emmanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)*

As Christians, we are called to bear Christ to the world. This Advent, how will you strive to bring Christ into your world?

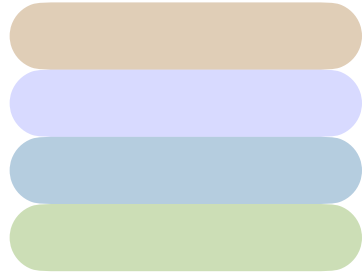
*Today Mary and the Magi's paths join. This is an opportunity to change guides if you wish for the upcoming week.*

## Shepherd's Simplicity

Begin and end each day with the following prayer for the Elevation of the Host at Mass:

*My Lord and My God!*





Today, all the paths gather to pause for a prayer experience.

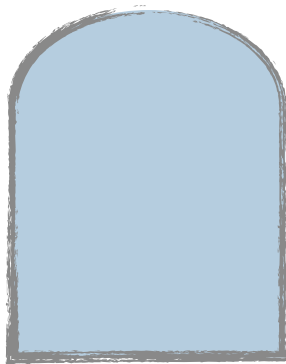
Find a comfortable position. Set a timer for two minutes. We will use this timer a few times. As the timer counts, close your eyes and repeat the following prayer:

*Behold, Emmanuel is coming into the world. He is coming to live within me.*

Reset the timer. Now, repeat the following prayer.

*Behold, all things are made new in Christ. Dear Holy Spirit, soften my heart to be open to God's Will.*

Reset the timer. Let yourself rest in silence and in the presence of God.



The Lord is

*With You*

Luke 1:28

## Joseph's Daily Task

Pick a day and time to attend Adoration this week. Commit to at least one hour in the presence of the Lord.

## Magi's Meditation

*Hail, favored one! The Lord is with You. (Luke 1:28)*

Read this passage over again. Spend today considering the ways the Lord is with *you*.

## Mary Ponders

What do you think Mary would have thought of upon receiving this greeting? Why is it important that we affirm the Lord's presence in Mary's life in the *Hail Mary* prayer? What does this say about Mary? What does it say about us?

## Shepherd's Simplicity

Spend the week pondering the wonder of God's plans with St. Augustine:

*Him whom the heavens could not contain the  
womb of one woman bore.*

## Joseph's Daily Task

Go back and read the verse for this week from Luke. What do you think Joseph thought about on the road to Bethlehem? When you are preparing to travel, what occupies your mind? Are you filled with peace or anxiety?

## Magi's Meditation

Dear Jesus,

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## Mary Ponders

Continue pondering yesterday's question. Use the journaling space if desired, or unite your prayer with those of the Shepherds.

## Shepherd's Simplicity

Spend the week pondering the wonder of God's plans with St. Augustine:

*Him whom the heavens could not contain the  
womb of one woman bore.*

DECEMBER 6, 2021 - MONDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

## Joseph's Daily Task

Write out this week's verse from Luke. This can be on a notecard, printed on paper or cardstock, decorated or kept simple. Place this verse where you will see it every day, preferably multiple times a day. Let it be a reminder today and the rest of the week that the Lord is with YOU.

## Magi's Meditation

Wake up, O man - it was for you that God was made man! Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light. For you, I say, was God made man. Eternal death would have awaited you had he not been born in time. Never would you be freed from your sinful flesh, had he not taken to himself the likeness of sinful flesh. Everlasting would be your misery, had he not performed this act of mercy. You would not have come to life again, had he not come to die your death. You would have broken down, had he not come to help. You would have perished, had he not come.

*St. Augustine, The Wonder of the Incarnation.*

*Mary's path joins with the Shepherds and the Magi. Feel free to explore prayer opportunities with either of these guides in the coming days.*

## Mary Ponders

## Shepherd's Simplicity

Spend the week pondering the wonder of God's plans with St. Augustine:

*Him whom the heavens could not contain the  
womb of one woman bore.*

## Joseph's Daily Task

Use the space provided for the Magi to journal about your Advent journal so far. If you have not yet, try to go to Adoration or daily Mass. You may wish to journal in the presence of the Lord. You can also use today as an opportunity to change guides if you wish.

## Magi's Meditation

Dear Jesus,

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## Mary Ponders

Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done unto me according to your word.

*Luke 1:38*

## Shepherd's Simplicity

Spend the week pondering the wonder of God's plans with St. Augustine:

*Him whom the heavens could not contain the  
womb of one woman bore.*

## Joseph's Daily Task

Make preparations for this coming weekend to spend time continuing to decorate your home in preparation for Christmas. Perhaps you are ready to begin putting lights on your Christmas tree or on the exterior of your home? Chose one thing to do to continue, slowly, making room for Christ.

## Magi's Meditation

Re-read the text from St. Augustine. What struck you? How can you take this exhortation to heart? Today, make one meaningful, if necessary, scheduled, move in the direction the Holy Spirit is leading you through this reading.

## Mary Ponders

Consider this: Mary is the first tabernacle, because she was the first to bear Christ within her body. As Catholics, each week at Mass we become tabernacles when we bring Christ into our bodies in the Eucharist.

Spend today and tomorrow pondering this great mystery.

## Shepherd's Simplicity

Spend the week pondering the wonder of God's plans with St. Augustine:

*Him whom the heavens could not contain the  
womb of one woman bore.*

## Joseph's Daily Task

As you prepare your home to welcome Christ, how is your heart? Take time this weekend to help a friend or neighbor with a task they find challenging. You could also volunteer at your parish to help with decorations, shoveling or cleaning as you prepare to welcome Christ in your community.

## Magi's Meditation

Dear Jesus,

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## Mary Ponders

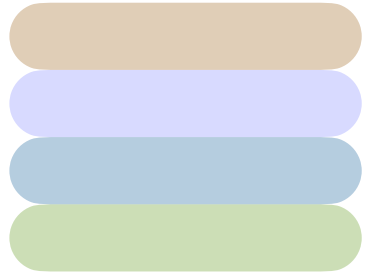
Use the Magi's space to talk with God about your recollections from this week.

## Shepherd's Simplicity

Spend the week pondering the wonder of God's plans with St. Augustine:

*Him whom the heavens could not contain the  
womb of one woman bore.*





Today, all the paths will join together in an ancient practice of the Church. From early in Church communities, a rhythm of prayer helped to sanctify the day. Traditionally, at the following hours or times of day, monks, priests and nuns would pause their daily activities and pray the Liturgy of the hours:

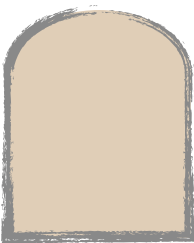
Midnight, before sunrise, 6am, 9am, noon, 3pm, evening Vespers, before bed.

Yes, they would even rise at midnight to pray, interrupting their sleep to honor God and the gifts He has given.

Today, set an alarm on your phone, microwave, clock, etc., for 9am, noon and 3pm. Hallow your day by pausing at these hours (you are welcome to add others if you wish) and praying the following prayer:

*Lord prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy. With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for you.*

*Adapted from the song Sanctuary*



Do not be

*Afraid*

Luke 2:10

## Joseph's Daily Task

Pick a day and time to attend Adoration this week. Commit to at least one hour in the presence of the Lord.

## Magi's Meditation

*Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all people. (Luke 2:10)*

Read this passage over again. Spend today considering the good news the angel spoke of is for you as well.

## Mary Ponders

Fear is a powerful tool of the devil. Fear causes us to clutch tightly to what we know and feel we can control. Take some time to think about an area of life where you find yourself grasping for control. How is the angel speaking to you today?

## Shepherd's Simplicity

This week we are memorizing Philippians 4:4-7:

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again, rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

## Joseph's Daily Task

Perform an Examination of Conscience. There is one at the back of this text if you need to reference a guide. Begin to plan when you will be able to go to Confession before Christmas.

## Magi's Meditation

Dear Jesus,

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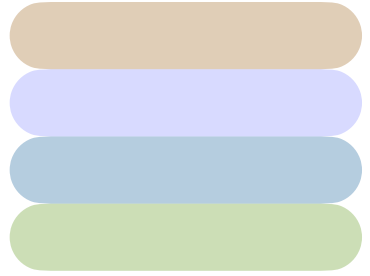
## Mary Ponders

Continue your reflections from yesterday into today. Use the Magi's journaling space if you desire.

## Shepherd's Simplicity

This week we are memorizing Philippians 4:4-7:

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again, rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*



The paths all join today and tomorrow. At the conclusion of tomorrow, feel free to return onto the path you were on or to try out a different guide than you have had the opportunity to travel with.

Today we will reflect on the following text from Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*:

*Do not be afraid to set your sights higher, to allow yourself to be loved and liberated by God. Do not be afraid to let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit. Holiness does not make you less human, since it is an encounter between your weakness and the power of God's grace. For in the words of León Bloy, when all is said and done, "the only great tragedy in life, is not to become a saint". (34).*

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines, typical of notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## Joseph's Daily Task

Reread our verse for this week. Do you have fears that are hard to trust God with? Take some time today to sit with this question. Have a conversation with God about where He is calling you to trust, to not be afraid.

## Magi's Meditation

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access [by faith] to this grace in which we stand, and boast in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, we even boast in our afflictions, knowing affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and *hope does not disappoint*, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

*Romans 5:1-5*

## Mary Ponders

Continue pondering Tuesday's reading. If you wish for more, join those on the Joseph path earlier this week and pray an Examination of Conscience. There is one provided at the back of this text.

## Shepherd's Simplicity

This week we are memorizing Philippians 4:4-7:

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again, rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

## Joseph's Daily Task

Looking ahead to this weekend, find a time to connect with your friends or family in a meaningful way. Maybe you can have some over for lunch or tea or offer to host a Zoom call. Don't wait for Christmas Day to spend time with these important people in your life.

## Magi's Meditation

Dear Jesus,

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## Mary Ponders

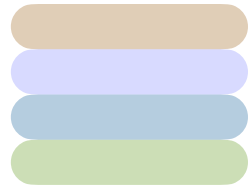
In light of our week's Scripture message and Pope Francis' exhortation, what is one meaningful and concrete step you can make toward becoming a bold saint in these days leading up to Christmas?

## Shepherd's Simplicity

This week we are memorizing Philippians 4:4-7:

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again, rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*





As is our custom, today the paths join together. We will reflect together on the O Antiphons. These antiphons have ancient roots and traditionally are prayed starting yesterday, December 17 through December 23.

December 17

O Wisdom of our God Most High, guiding creation with power and love: come to teach us the path of knowledge!

December 18

O Leader of the House of Israel, giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai: come to rescue us with your mighty power!

December 19

O Root of Jesse's stem, sign of God's love for all his people: come to save us without delay!

December 20

O Key of David, opening the gates of God's eternal Kingdom: come and free the prisoners of darkness!

December 21

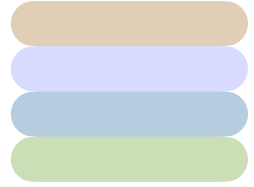
O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: come and shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death!

December 22

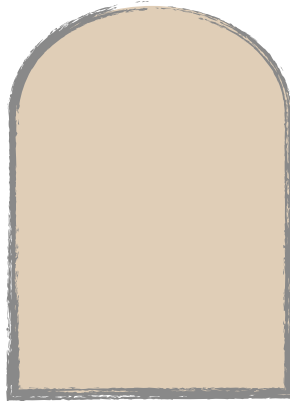
O King of all nations and keystone of the Church: come and save man, whom you formed in the dust!

December 23

O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law: come to save us, Lord our God!



Consider these antiphons. Each antiphon speaks of a prophecy or a promise made by God to the Jewish people about the coming Messiah. During these next days, the Church invites us to join our longing with their generational longings for the Messiah, Emmanuel to arrive. While we already know that Jesus has indeed come and saved us, it is important to always remember that we still need saving, we are not perfect. We still need Jesus. We still need a Savior. We invite Jesus into our life as we sing out, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel!”



Let us

*Go*

then, to Bethlehem

Luke 2:15

## Joseph's Daily Task

Pick a day and time to attend Adoration this week. Commit to at least one hour in the presence of the Lord.

## Magi's Meditation

*Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us  
(Luke 2:15)*

Read this passage over again. Spend today considering where God is asking you to go in your walk with Him.

## Mary Ponders

Upon hearing the news of Elizabeth, Mary went to her, traveling for 4-5 days and probably on foot. Mary did not know what she would find there, but she knew it was where the Lord wanted her to go. Where is God asking you to go this week? With whom is He asking you to spend your time?

## Shepherd's Simplicity

As Christmas draws closer, spend extra time in the Lord's presence this week. Make a plan to spend at least 2 extra hours with Him - Adoration, daily Mass, Confession or simply time in your parish or chapel. Hallow this week.

## Joseph's Daily Task

Slow your day down today. Take the time to say a Rosary. Monday's are dedicated to the Joyful Mysteries.

## Magi's Meditation

Dear Jesus,

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## Mary Ponders

Continue your reflections from yesterday into today. Use the Magi's journaling space if you desire.

## Shepherd's Simplicity

As Christmas draws closer, spend extra time in the Lord's presence this week. Make a plan to spend at least 2 extra hours with Him - Adoration, daily Mass, Confession or simply time in your parish or chapel. Hallow this week.

## Joseph's Daily Task

This is a busy week. Look at your to-do list and consider what tasks are drawing you closer to God. Which are actually pushing your focus away from Him? Challenge yourself to let go of one thing that is keeping you from entering into the mystery of the Incarnation more fully.

## Magi's Meditation

The Christmas season is domestic; and for that reason most people now prepare for it by struggling tramcars, standing in queues, rushing away in trains, crowding despairingly into tea-shops, and wondering when or whether they will ever get home. I do not know whether some of them disappear for ever in the toy department or simply lie down and die in the tea-rooms; but by the look of them, it is quite likely. Just before the great festival of the home the whole population seems to have become homeless.

*G.K. Chesterton, The Spirit of Christmas*

## Mary Ponders

Join with the Magi today in reflecting on the text by G.K. Chesterton about the Christmas season.

## Shepherd's Simplicity

As Christmas draws closer, spend extra time in the Lord's presence this week. Make a plan to spend at least 2 extra hours with Him - Adoration, daily Mass, Confession or simply time in your parish or chapel. Hallow this week.

## Joseph's Daily Task

If you have not yet, this is the perfect time to set up your creche (cre-SH) or Nativity scene. Spend some time prayerfully before the scene, imagine yourself as one of the figures. What would it be like to be there?

## Magi's Meditation

Dear Jesus,

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## Mary Ponders

Take time today to enjoy being in your home. What blessings do you see around you?

## Shepherd's Simplicity

As Christmas draws closer, spend extra time in the Lord's presence this week. Make a plan to spend at least 2 extra hours with Him - Adoration, daily Mass, Confession or simply time in your parish or chapel. Hallow this week.

## Joseph's Daily Task

What Mass do you plan to attend for Christmas Eve or Christmas Day? If you are able to, consider adding an additional liturgical celebration to your Christmastide. The Masses for the Eve, Midnight, At Dawn and Day are each unique. Try to experience one that is new to you this year.

## Magi's Meditation

### Mary Ponders

### Shepherd's Simplicity

Both Mary and the Magi have been contemplating with G.K. Chesterton the value of staying home during the Christmas season. Yet our verse for the week is to go out to see the Christ-child. The question to ponder isn't so much should I leave my house or not, but for what purpose am I going out? Am I going out, seeking to find Jesus in the other, to serve Him in my neighbor? Or am I going out for my own gratification, my own prestige or desire to be noticed and thanked?

This is a busy time of year. But our busyness should not interfere with our ability to serve those around us. Find a way to be of service to another and do not seek credit for the action.

*This will be the last opportunity to change guides for the season.*



## Joseph's Daily Task

What has the Holy Spirit opened your eyes to this Advent?  
What concrete plans can you make for December 26, 2021  
to carry your growth forward?

## Magi's Meditation

This is our present Festival; is it this which we are celebrating today, the Coming of God to Man, that we might go forth, or rather (for this is the more proper expression) that we might go back to God - that putting off the old man, we might put on the New; and that as we died in Adam, so we might live in Christ.

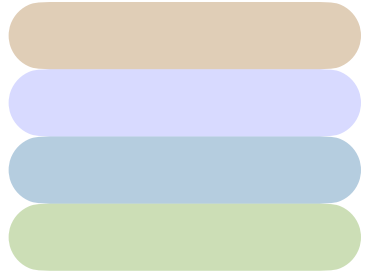
*St. Gregory Nazianzen, Oration 38, On the Theophany, or  
Birthday of Christ*

## Mary Ponders

Continue your pondering from yesterday. If you wish, you may also spend time contemplating the question posed to Joseph's followers today.

## Shepherd's Simplicity

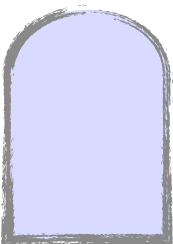
As Christmas draws closer, spend extra time in the Lord's presence this week. Make a plan to spend at least 2 extra hours with Him - Adoration, daily Mass, Confession or simply time in your parish or chapel. Hallow this week.



This is the day we have been waiting for, preparing for. Jesus, true God and true Man, has quietly entered the world. Jesus, this little child, wordless as St. Augustine points out, yet the very Word of God (Sermon 184). As we draw close to Christ on this day of His birth, spend some time reflecting with Pope Benedict XVI. Pope Benedict asks us to go across, beyond, with the shepherds. To take that first step into the newness of life that God is creating for us. Where is God calling you to walk as we enter the Christmas season? How can you respond to Him with joy, peace and trust?

*Let us go over to Bethlehem, says the Church's liturgy to us today. Trans-eamus is what the Latin Bible says: let us go "across", daring to step beyond, to make the "transition" by which we step outside our habits of thought and habits of life, across the purely material world into the real one, across to the God who in his turn has come across to us. Let us ask the Lord to grant that we may overcome our limits, our world, to help us to encounter him, especially at the moment when he places himself into our hands and into our heart in the Holy Eucharist.*

*Pope Benedict XV,  
Midnight Mass Homily, December 24, 2012*



# A BRIEF EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

An examination of conscience is the act of looking prayerfully into our hearts to ask how we have hurt our relationships with God and other people through our thoughts, words, and actions. We reflect on the The Ten Commandments and the teachings of the Church. The questions below help us in our examination of conscience.

## **My Relationship With God**

- What steps am I taking to help me grow closer to God and to others? Do I turn to God often during the day, especially when I am tempted?
- Do I participate at Mass with attention and devotion on Sundays and holy days? Do I pray often and read the Bible?
- Do I use God's name and the names of Jesus, Mary, and the saints with love and reverence?

## **My Relationships With Family, Friends, and Neighbors**

- Have I set a bad example through my words or actions? Do I treat others fairly? Do I spread stories that hurt other people?
- Am I loving of those in my family? Am I respectful of my neighbors, my friends, and those in authority?
- Do I show respect for my body and for the bodies of others?
- Do I keep away from forms of entertainment that do not respect God's gift of sexuality?
- Have I taken or damaged anything that did not belong to me? Have I cheated, copied homework, or lied?
- Do I quarrel with others just so I can get my own way? Do I insult others to try to make them think they are less than I am?
- Do I hold grudges and try to hurt people who I think have hurt me?

*From <https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/sacraments/reconciliation/an-examination-of-conscience/>*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Kate Taliaferro is an Air Force wife and mother of 6 children. While originally from the Chicagoland area, she and her husband presently live in Kansas. She is a homeschooler, avid reader and loves all kinds of yarn and fiber crafts. She blogs at [dailygraces.net](http://dailygraces.net) and can also be found on Instagram as @dailygraces3.

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